



Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Southwest Region, 3550 Mormon Coulee Road, La Crosse, WI 54601

Nelrae Succio, D.E.
Minnesota Department of Transportation, District 6
2900 48th Street NW
Rochester, MN 55901-5848

Dear Ms. Succio:

This letter serves as WisDOT concurrence with the conclusions of the MNDOT Feasibility Study on bicycle/pedestrian accommodations for the Dresbach Bridge. We believe the preferred alternative (Option 3) -- providing structural connections for a future suspended path on the bridge structure -- best serves the interests of taxpayers while providing an opportunity for multi-modal accommodations in the future.

The WisDOT Southwest Region supports Option 3 for the following reasons:

- Provides a viable opportunity to construct a bike/ped facility in the future.
- Provides maximum flexibility for accommodation of a future I-90 trail from a location alternative perspective.
- Minimizes risk to taxpayers in the event a future trail is never constructed.
- Allows future connectivity while minimizing short term costs.
- Allows critical future decisions to be made without significant initial costs.

As you know, a number of important issues related to bike/ped accommodations on the Wisconsin side have yet to be resolved, including impacts to the National Wildlife Refuge, the concurrence of multiple partner agencies, local cost share, maintenance authority and maintenance feasibility.

By including the structural connections in the bridge reconstruction project scheduled to begin in 2012, costs will be minimized at no expense to the prospects of future connectivity. As a multi-modal public agency, we believe this is a cost-conscious and reasonable approach.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I can be reached at (608) 785-9026 or joseph.olson@dot.wi.gov.

Joseph S. Olson, P.E.
Director – Southwest Region



La Crosse Area Planning Committee

*Metropolitan Planning Organization
Serving the La Crosse/La Crescent Urbanized Area*

Tom Faella, Director Jackie Eastwood, Transportation Planner
La Crosse County Administrative Center
400 4th Street North ☐ Room 2300 ☐ La Crosse, WI 54601-3200
PH: 608.785.5977 or 608.785.6141 FAX: 608.793.6525

November 21, 2011

Jai Kalsy, P.E., Principal Engineer - Design
Mn/DOT District 6
2900 48th Street NW
Rochester, MN 55901

Re: LAPC Comments on I-90 Dresbach Bridge Project Bicycle/Pedestrian Accommodation Feasibility Study

Dear Mr. Kalsy:

Thank you for presenting information at the November 16, 2011 LAPC meeting on the *Dresbach Bridge Bicycle/Pedestrian Accommodation Feasibility Study Interim Summary of Findings*.

As you saw at the November 16 meeting, the LAPC Policy Board continues to insist that bike/ped accommodations be included in some form in the Dresbach Bridge replacement project. This position was reiterated in a motion to remove the project from the LAPC 2012 – 2015 *Transportation Improvement Program* and with a reaffirmation of the LAPC regional bicycle plan that calls for designing the capacity for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations into the Dresbach Bridge project and its interchange.

The LAPC Policy Board has not selected or recommended one of the alternatives presented in the Bicycle/Pedestrian Feasibility Study. However, there is definite interest in the on-deck solution proposed for the Mississippi River crossing in the Iowa/Illinois I-74 Quad Cities Corridor Study. I think that an on-deck alternative with interpretive opportunities would be the ultimate preferred solution. The suspended trail option offers an opportunity to include capacity design for a possible future accommodation and may present benefits in terms of phasing and maintenance.

Speaking of maintenance, it is imperative that any preferred alternative be acceptable to a local maintaining entity in terms of cost and the ability to both maintain the accommodation and clear ice, snow and other debris from the I-90 bridge deck. The La Crosse County Highway Commissioner is studying the alternatives designs and will provide key recommendations for alternative selection.

The LAPC looks forward to reviewing the final Environmental Analysis and preferred alternative in December. Please do not hesitate to contact me or the LAPC for further discussion.

Thank you for considering these items in the final review process.

Sincerely,

Tom Faella, Executive Director

Cc: LAPC Policy Board; Ron Chamberlain, La Crosse County; Michael Hoelker, WisDOT



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ST. PAUL DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
180 FIFTH STREET EAST, SUITE 700
ST. PAUL MINNESOTA 55101-1678

REPLY TO
ATTENTION

October 28, 2011

Operations
Regulatory (2007-06271-DAS)

Mr. Jai Kalsy, P.E.
Mn/DOT District 6
2900 48th Street NW
Rochester, Minnesota 55901-5848

Dear Mr. Kalsy:

This letter is in response to your request for agency comments with regard to the "Draft I-90 Trail Accommodation Feasibility Study Exhibits" you provided to us by email on September 12, 2011, and discussed during subsequent meetings. The study is being conducted in conjunction with the I-90 Bridge and Interchange Project (Minn. State Project 8580-149). I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the current range of trail accommodation alternatives being considered. Please consider the following general information concerning our regulatory program that may apply to the proposed project.

If the proposal involves activity in navigable waters of the United States, it may be subject to the Corps of Engineers' jurisdiction under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (Section 10). If the proposal involves discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, it may be subject to the Corps of Engineers' jurisdiction under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA Section 404).

The Corps' evaluation of a Section 10 and/or a Section 404 permit application involves multiple analyses, including (1) evaluating the proposal's impacts in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (33 CFR part 325), (2) determining whether the proposal is contrary to the public interest (33 CFR § 320.4), and (3) in the case of a Section 404 permit, determining whether the proposal complies with the Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (Guidelines) (40 CFR part 230).

The Guidelines restrict discharges when there are feasible, less environmentally-damaging alternatives available. If the project is in a special aquatic site (such as a wetland), and if the project does not need to be in or near the special aquatic site to fulfill its basic purpose, then the Corps is required to assume that there are practicable alternatives that do not involve special aquatic sites. The applicant must clearly demonstrate to the Corps that practicable alternatives are not available. In determining "appropriate and practicable" measures to offset unavoidable impacts, such measures should be appropriate to the scope and degree of those impacts and practicable in terms of cost, existing technology, and logistics in light of overall project purposes.

According to the information you have provided, the alternatives would include a range of wetland impacts from approximately 1.5 to 6.4 acres. The impacts would consist of floodplain forest and wet meadow wetland adjacent to the Mississippi River. Their proximity to the Mississippi River, the limited opportunities for compensatory mitigation, and the temporal loss associated with replacing mature wetland communities suggest a high wetland function impact and would result in a similarly high consideration of avoidance options.

The impacts are not supported in the previously stated project purposes of bridge structural and maintenance problems, bridge shoulder width, roadway geometry and safety, and interchange operational problems/capacity. In accordance with CWA Section 404, the project purpose must not be constructed in a manner that precludes or artificially narrows consideration of practicable alternatives and the purpose must not be so broad as to render the pool of alternatives inordinately large. Depending on the stated purpose, the range of alternatives may change. For example, needs to provide recreational opportunities or a transportation corridor may require the consideration of dissimilar alternatives.


It is our understanding that additional options are being considered, including no provisions to accommodate future trail construction, and some options involving bridge design that would accommodate future trail construction. The construction of trail provisions for future development does not presume authorization of additional wetland impacts.

In order to more fully consider the alternative options we would require documentation of the laws and/or regulations that may require the consideration or selection of certain alternatives, the anticipated usage of road and trail accommodations to support proposed and anticipated wetland impacts, a precise and accurate purpose and need statement, and definitive types and amounts of requested and anticipated wetland impacts.

If you have any questions, contact David Studenski in our La Crescent Field office at (507) 895-2064. In any correspondence or inquiries, please refer to the Regulatory number shown above.

Sincerely,



 Tamara E. Cameron
Chief, Regulatory Branch

Copy furnished:
Mr. Tim Yager (US FWS)



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Minnesota Division

October 21, 2011

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www.fhwa.dot.gov/mndiv

Thomas K. Sorel
Commissioner of Transportation
Department of Transportation
MS 100, Transportation Building
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Re: Dresbach Bridge – FHWA Policies and Regulations on Bicycle/Pedestrian Accommodation

Dear Mr Sorel:

Per Mr. Tom Faella's August 11, 2011 request on behalf of the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC), we have reviewed the statutes of Title 23 and Title 49 of the United States Code (USC), the regulations of Title 23 and Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), and the policy and guidance of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) with regard to the requirements of bicycle/pedestrian accommodation on Federal-aid projects. Electronic versions of the Title 23 and Title 49 statutes and regulations can be found at the FHWA Resources website:

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/resources/legsregs/>. A comprehensive list of policy and guidance can be found on the FHWA's Bicycle and Pedestrian Program website:
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/guidance.htm>.

We have identified key references which provide the most primary and current information. These are listed in the enclosed spreadsheet for convenient reference.

The March 2010 USDOT policy is to "incorporate safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities into transportation projects." In addition, the USDOT "encourages bicycle and pedestrian accommodation on bridge projects including facilities on limited-access bridges with connections to streets or paths." However, we find very few statutes, regulations, or policy, and guidance memoranda that have unconditional requirements for bike/ped accommodation on all Federal-aid construction projects. Those references having "shall", "must", or "will" requirements, and their applicability to the Dresbach bridge replacement project, are as follows:

- **23 USC 217 Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways:**
[http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/usc.cgi?ACTION=RETRIEVE&FILE=\\$\\$xa\\$\\$busc23.wais&start=1595439&SIZE=17005&TYPE=TEXT](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/usc.cgi?ACTION=RETRIEVE&FILE=$$xa$$busc23.wais&start=1595439&SIZE=17005&TYPE=TEXT) Reference 23 USC 217(e) Bridges, which states two conditions. Currently, bicycles are not permitted to operate on this portion of I-90. Mn/DOT's Bike Feasibility Study will determine whether the safe accommodation of bicycles can be provided at a reasonable cost.

- **23 CFR 652 Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodations and Projects:**
http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=7f603ec660922dfa65ba82ff44906101&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title23/23cfr652_main_02.tpl
 - 23 CFR 652.5 is more stringent than the March 2010 USDOT policy and 23 USC 217, by limiting the requirement for bridge deck replacement or rehabilitation to highways without full control of access. I-90 is a full access control roadway.
 - 23 CFR 652.7 requires that only bike paths used for transportation purposes are eligible for Federal-aid funding.
 - 23 CFR 652.7 provides that if five conditions are met, the bike path may be authorized, but it does not require authorization of the project. For the Dresbach project, conditions (1), (2), (3) and (5) are typically met through the course of project development. Condition (4), "The estimated cost of the project is consistent with the anticipated benefits to the community" is difficult to analyze. However, it must be satisfactorily evaluated and documented in the Bike Feasibility Study. A need for the project must be established in the Bike Feasibility Study.

- **October 22, 2008 FHWA Guidance – Bicycle and Pedestrian Provisions of Federal Transportation Legislation:** <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/bp-guid.htm>
 - States that safe accommodation of nonmotorized users shall be considered during the planning, development, and construction of all Federal-aid transportation projects and programs but does not require accommodation in every transportation project.
 - "Bicycle and pedestrian projects are broadly eligible for most Federal surface transportation funding categories. Eligibility does not, however, guarantee that bicycle and pedestrian projects, plans, and programs will be funded -- States and MPOs retain broad control over project selection procedures and choices and can set their own priorities for funding."

- **FHWA Design Guidance Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel: A Recommended Approach**
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/design.htm> and FHWA Supplementary Design Guidance for Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/supdesgn.htm> state that "1. Bicycle and pedestrian ways shall be established in new construction and reconstruction projects in all urbanized areas unless one or more of three conditions are met:
 - bicyclists and pedestrians are prohibited by law from using the roadway. In this instance, a greater effort may be necessary to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians elsewhere within the right of way or within the same transportation corridor.
 - the cost of establishing bikeways or walkways would be excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use. Excessively disproportionate is defined as exceeding twenty percent of the cost of the larger transportation

project. [Note that the supplementary design guidance clarifies 'This 20 percent figure should be used in an advisory rather than an absolute sense.']

- where sparsity of population or other factors indicate an absence of need. For example, the Portland Pedestrian Guide requires 'all construction of new public streets' to include sidewalk improvements on both sides, unless the street is a cul-de-sac with four or fewer dwellings or the street has severe topographic or natural resource constraints."

We believe that the October 22, 2008 FHWA Guidance provides the best summary of what is required: In reference to several sections of 23 USC, "While these sections stop short of requiring specific bicycle and pedestrian accommodation in every transportation project, Congress clearly intends for bicyclists and pedestrians to have safe, convenient access to the transportation system and sees every transportation improvement as an opportunity to enhance the safety and convenience of the two modes."

Federal policy and guidance indicate that the decision to accommodate bike/ped uses must be made on a project-by-project basis, and even when there is consideration of bike/ped use in the preliminary design and environmental processes, alternatives do not necessarily need to be carried forward into the environmental document.

We believe the efforts of Mn/DOT to analyze the cost and feasibility of accommodating future bike/ped travelers on the proposed Dresbach Bridge meet the purpose and intent of USDOT and FHWA requirements. We also would like to make note that in 2008, the LAPC determined, in conjunction with local advocacy groups, that only one bicycle and pedestrian river crossing was necessary to meet the needs of the public, as part of the 2035 Coulee Regional Bicycle Plan. The LAPC voted on March 19, 2008 to select the Wagon Wheel Trail on TH 14/61 to construct a connection between La Crescent and La Crosse, instead of advocating to build a separate trail adjacent to the I-90 Dresbach Bridge.

Sincerely,



Derrell E Turner
Division Administrator

Enclosure

AG/trb

cc: 2 Mn/DOT

1 La Crosse Area Planning Committee – Tom Faella, e-copy Faella.Tom@co.La-Crosse.wi.us

1 Mn/DOT - Tim Mitchell, e-copy tim.mitchell@state.mn.us

1 Mn/DOT, District 6 - Jai Kalsy jai.kalsy@state.mn.us

DMS – #30928 SP 8580-149 I-90 Dresbach Br FINAL DRAFT BIKE-PED POLICY

Kalsy, Jai (DOT)

From: Collins, Kim (DOT)
Sent: Thursday, October 13, 2011 3:47 PM
To: Ross, Jennie (DOT); Kalsy, Jai (DOT)
Cc: Parker, Betsy (DOT)
Subject: Dresbach Bridge Bike/Ped Accommodation

Categories: Dresbach Bridge

Jennie,

I am providing you with the following information in response to the request for assistance in interpreting the various state laws and policy that may impact whether MnDOT is required to provide bike and pedestrian accommodations on the Dresbach Bridge. As we discussed, FHWA and WISDOT are performing a similar review and the agencies will reconvene to share their research.

State Law

The I-90 Dresbach bridge will touchdown in Minnesota in the area of Dresbach and La Crescent Townships. Minn. Stat. §165.14 states that *all bridge projects funded under this section* (i.e. use of Chapter 152 funds) *in 2012 or later must include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations if both sides of the bridge are located in a city or the bridge links a pedestrian way, shared-use path, trail, or scenic bikeway.* In this case, neither side of the bridge touches down in a city. In Minnesota, the bridge is located in a township and in Wisconsin, its located in the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge. The bridge does not link a pedestrian way, shared-use path, trail, or bikeway. There is the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) along Old 61 in Minnesota, however, the trail runs north/south and does not cross the existing I-90 bridge. There is no bike or ped way located where the bridge ends in the Refuge. The Dresbach Bridge project does not meet the criteria that requires bike and ped accommodations.

The existing I-90 bridge which connects Minnesota to Wisconsin does not have bicycle or pedestrian facilities, therefore, Minn. Stat. §160.264 which requires the replacement of bikeways and pedestrian ways does not apply.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Policy Considerations

There is a strong policy statement in support of bikeways. In Minn. Stat. §174.75, Complete Streets, requires ("shall") the transportation commissioner to implement a complete streets policy which by definition includes considering "...the needs of motorists, pedestrians,...bicyclists...in a manner that is sensitive to the local context..." Minn. Stat. §160.265 requires ("shall") the MnDOT commissioner to establish a program for state bikeways in coordination with other state agencies and local governmental units. Also, in §174.01, the transportation goals for the state include providing "multimodal and intermodal transportation facilities; and maximizing "the long-term benefits received for each state transportation investment."

Again, bike and ped accommodations on the Dresbach Bridge are not required by MN law, but consideration of them as a multimodal approach to transportation is consistent with these policy statements.

Let me know if there is anything else you need.

Kim Collins
Staff Attorney
Office of Chief Counsel
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155
Ph: 651-366-3535



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge
51 E. Fourth Street - Room 101
Winona, Minnesota 55987



12 October 2011

Mr. Jai Kalsy
Project Manager
MnDOT District 6
2900 48th Street NW
Rochester, MN 55901-5848

Dear Mr. Kalsy:

On September 16, 2011 you introduced a Ped/Bike Trail Feasibility Study for the Dresbach Bridge/I-90 rebuild to Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge (Refuge) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and Federal Highways personnel at a meeting in La Crosse, WI. At the conclusion of that meeting, you requested the Refuge's comments on the alternatives. We offer the following for your consideration/response, but please understand that these comments represent concerns of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge and are not inclusive of other potential U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concerns.

Background:

The Dresbach Bridge/I-90, through a right-of-way permit with the Service, cross lands owned by the Department of the Interior and managed as part of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge (Refuge).

The Service regulation (50 CFR § 26.41) calls for the refuge manager to make a compatibility determination for rights-of-way. The policy that implements this regulation and is applicable to the Dresbach Bridge/I-90 Project is Chapter 603 FW 2. This policy states:

"D. Existing rights-of-way. We will not make a compatibility determination and will deny any request for maintenance of an existing right-of-way that will affect a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System, unless (1) the design adopts appropriate measures to avoid resource impacts and includes provisions to ensure no net loss of habitat quantity and quality; (2) restored or replacement areas identified in the design are afforded permanent protection as part of the national wildlife refuge or wetland management district affected by the maintenance; and (3) all restoration work is completed by the applicant prior to any title transfer or recording of the easement, if applicable. Maintenance of an existing right-of-way includes minor expansion or minor realignment to meet safety standards. Examples of minor expansion or minor realignment include:

expand the width of a road shoulder to reduce the angle of the slope; expand the area for viewing on-coming traffic at an intersection; and realign a curved section of a road to reduce the amount of curve in the road.”

The Service has worked with both WisDOT and MnDOT in developing a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), through which a minor realignment of the existing right-of-way for the Dresbach Bridge/I-90 rebuild could be determined to be compatible. The new alignment would require the addition of 1.4 acres upstream of the existing right-of-way easement. However, this new alignment would make it possible for MnDOT to convey 1.4 acres to the Service in fee ownership. Additionally, WisDOT will be able to turn back to the Service about 2.0 acres within the existing right-of-way easement. These acres would be downstream of the new alignment. Additionally, WisDOT is willing to quit claim 2.1 acres along the alignment to the Service in return for the right-of-way easement.

The proposed alignment would cause wetlands to be filled on Refuge property. Additional wetlands would be filled but are located on MnDOT lands. The filling of wetland would require wetland acres of equal or greater quality for mitigation. Wetland mitigation is scheduled to occur at the MnDOT site located in the Root River floodplain near Hokah, MN.

Once fully executed, the Memorandum of Agreement would result in a right-of-way realignment which is compatible with the purposes of the Refuge.

Refuge Comments/Questions:

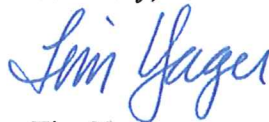
In late September 2011, MnDOT identified eight alternatives for the establishment of a bike trail along/within the Dresbach Bridge/I-90 right-of-way. In early October, MnDOT identified a 9th alternative outside of the Dresbach Bridge/I-90 right-of-way. The impacts on Refuge lands and resources resulting from construction of a bike trail along the Dresbach Bridge/I-90 right-of-way or the 9th alternative, outside of the right-of-way, have not previously been considered or evaluated for compatibility. For the bike path alternatives located along/within the Dresbach Bridge/I-90 right-of-way MnDOT identified the need for additional right-of-way (ranging from 0.2 to 2.7 additional acres needed). Depending on the bike path alternative, an additional 1.5 acres to 6.4 acres of wetlands would also be impacted for those alternatives along/within the Dresbach Bridge/I-90 right-of-way. MnDOT has not identified the right-of-way acreage needed for the 9th bike path alternative (located outside of the Dresbach Bridge/I-90 right-of-way) nor the Refuge or wetland acres affected by the 9th alternative. There are a number of issues that require clarification. They are:

- What data is available to support the need for a bike path along the I-90 right-of-way?
- The bike path feasibility study (what we have seen so far) does not adequately describe short- and long-term environmental impacts. We have Refuge acres impacted, but nothing else, including wetland impacts, threatened and endangered resources, submerged vegetation, etc has been identified. None of the alternatives identified avoid impacts to Refuge lands or resources (wetlands, bald eagle nesting territories or roost trees, other aquatic/terrestrial resources). Are there feasible alternative locations for a bike path that would meet identified needs and avoid impacts to Refuge resources?

- It is unclear if any impact minimization measures were considered for the bike path alternatives. Are minimization measures available to reduce the impacts to Refuge lands and resources?
- The land exchange and mitigation described in the draft MOU (see above) would not adequately compensate the Service for the loss of Refuge lands and resources associated with any of the bike path alternatives. How does MnDOT propose to replace the additional loss of Refuge lands associated with the bike path alternatives? The Refuge cannot find a realignment of a right-of-way permit to be compatible unless all impacts are completely mitigated.
- How will MnDOT evaluate the cumulative impacts of the bike path alternatives? Is there a comprehensive plan for bike path improvements? Since the alternatives end at Highway 53, it appears some future development will be needed with unknown/unevaluated impacts on Refuge resources.
- Has MnDOT identified a preferred or recommended bike path alternative? If so, what alternative is preferred and what resources are necessary to implement that alternative?

Questions or concerns can be directed to Tim Yager at 507-494-6219 or timothy_yager@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Tim Yager
Deputy Refuge Manager

cc: Jim Nissen
Tony Sullins

Kalsy, Jai (DOT)

From: Tom Faella <Faella.tom@co.la-crosse.wi.us>
Sent: Tuesday, October 11, 2011 2:00 PM
To: Kalsy, Jai (DOT)
Subject: RE: Dresbach Bike Trail Study Draft Meeting Summary and Next Meeting

Categories: Dresbach Bridge

Hi Jai,

Thanks for the meeting summary. The only comment I have is that although you report that "the group generally concluded that the option crossing the Lock & Dam was not a good option," I personally feel that option should be included if a more thorough corridor study is conducted, with input from the Corps of Engineers. It's possible that the hurdles to overcome on that option would not be greater than on the I-90 bridge itself.

At the BPAC meeting last night no further options were brought forward. BPAC members agreed that the features shown on the I-74 bridge would be desirable to incorporate into the project. Also BPAC members questioned the route selected from the Area of Interest to the bridge on the South options. Is there a way that the route could stay on the north side of the highway until meeting the bridge, possibly following a route similar to those in the North options, perhaps with a stairway or underpass at the bridge?

We can discuss the BPAC recommendations at the meeting on Thursday.

Thank you,

Tom Faella
Executive Director, La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC)

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www.LAPC.org Faella.Tom@co.la-crosse.wi.us

From: Kalsy, Jai (DOT) [<mailto:jai.kalsy@state.mn.us>]
Sent: Tuesday, October 11, 2011 1:42 PM
To: Tom Faella; 'ProDonald@aol.com' (ProDonald@aol.com); John Von Ruden (john.vonruden@dot.wi.gov); Paulson, Greg (DOT); Mitchell, Tim (DOT); 'Abbi.Ginsberg@dot.gov' (Abbi.Ginsberg@dot.gov); Hoelker, Michael - DOT
Cc: Jim Nissen (James.Nissen@fws.gov); David Studenski (david.a.studenski@usace.army.mil)
Subject: Dresbach Bike Trail Study Draft Meeting Summary and Next Meeting

All-

Attached are my summary notes regarding our last meeting a couple of weeks ago. I put these together shortly after our meeting based on my recollection of the discussion (I did not have the chance to write down any notes).

Please review and let me know if anything should be added.

Also, our next meeting is confirmed for Thursday, Oct. 13th from 8:30am to 10:00 am at the La Crescent City Hall. I will send out an agenda tomorrow. Let me know if you have any questions.

Regards,



Minnesota Department of Transportation

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January 21, 2011

Tom Faella, Director
La Crosse Area Planning Committee
400 4th Street North, Room 3050
La Crosse, WI 54601-3200

RE: Dresbach Bridge Project – S.P. 8580-149

Dear Tom:

Discussions between the Minnesota Department of Transportation's District 6 and Mn/DOT Bridge Office and their bridge consultant have led to the conclusion that it is not feasible to insert fittings or strengthen the design of the bridge to accommodate a future bicycle/pedestrian facility on either of the new Dresbach bridges across the Mississippi River. We realize that this will have an impact on bicycle/pedestrian trail planning for the future but the problems inherent with this locale are too significant to overcome.

The problems are (in no particular order):

- Schedule Impact – It will take time to analyze the purpose and need of such a facility and then design it so that the appropriate modifications can be made to the existing bridge design. The bridge design contract is on a very tight schedule to deliver the bridge plans by the fall of 2011.
- Cost – The cost for the fittings and interior design modifications to stressing strands and reinforcing steel is estimated to be between \$0.5 million to \$1.0 million. The cost for the analysis and design of those items is estimated to be \$25,000 to \$75,000. Coupled with this is the fact that a whole new casting form will need to be developed for the different interior geometry of the bridge that will have the bike/ped facility on it – instead of using the same form from the twin bridge.
- Participating partners – Our partners may not want to participate in sharing the costs. Federal Highway Administration has indicated they cannot participate with federal funding unless the entire bike/ped facility is planned and assessed for impacts and cost. Wisconsin Department of Transportation has indicated that they have no plans to fund such a facility within the I-90 corridor from the east end of the Dresbach bridges to the rest area on French island. This segment includes two sets of bridges - across Round Lake and across Black River that would need to be rehabilitated or replaced to accommodate bike/ped lanes.
- Environmental – If the bike/ped facility were not allowed in the I-90 right-of-way, it would have to be located within the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge and would need environmental clearances and agency approvals. This area is a forested wetland, so mitigation procedures would need to be implemented. Early in the project development the USFWS indicated they had concerns for placement within the Refuge.



- Alternative route – Several agencies including FHWA have funded the Wagon Wheel Trail for bikes/peds that will connect the cities of La Crescent and La Crosse via the US14/61 corridor. This trail crosses the Mississippi River approximately 4 miles downstream from the Dresbach Bridge as measured along US 14/61.
- Bridge Security – A bike/ped facility located under one of the wings of the box girder or between the twin bridges would afford better access to vulnerable points on the bridge to persons seeking to damage the bridge or to deface it.
- Biker/Pedestrian Security – The bike/ped facility on the bridge will be about 0.5 miles long and could present a risk to users from lawbreakers. A user having a health problem on the facility would need to be evacuated from the facility and it would not be designed to accommodate ambulances or other emergency responder vehicles except ATV type vehicles.
- Inspection and Maintenance Impacts – Bridge safety inspections and certain maintenance operations could be impacted if the bike/ped facility is located between the bridges. This would deny or inhibit access to certain underside areas of the bridge via the snooper truck and basket.
- Aesthetics – The positioning of the bike/ped facility under the wing of the box girder would have a detrimental effect on the aesthetics of the bridge when viewed from a distance. The user of the facility would experience the tunnel effect when using this facility if it is suspended between the bridges and would not have a view of the horizon. The user would have the same tunnel effect to a lesser degree when the facility is suspended from the wing of the box girder. The facility will need to have a chain link fence surrounding it on both sides and on top if it is positioned between or suspended from the bridges. If the facility is located on the deck, highway noise and wind would detract from the scenic viewing.
- Lighting – Lighting would be desired by the users of the bike/ped facility for safety and security but this could be an aesthetic detriment for viewing the bridge from a distance. The US Fish & Wildlife Service has expressed concern for wildlife and refuge visitors if the bridge was lighted. Lighting of a bike/ped facility could raise similar concerns.

Finally, the issue of use needs to be considered. If this bike/ped facility is constructed, there will be two bike ped crossings of the Mississippi River within 4 miles of each other, thus dividing the number of users of these facilities. We have not yet seen any projections of how many people will use the I-90 facility. With some of the problems identified above, there could be less use than that of other river crossings. The problem we want to avoid is spending \$10 million or so of public funds on a facility that is not used much or spending in excess of one million dollars to prepare for such a facility when there is a very real possibility that the facility may be underutilized. This could produce a negative public perception of the project. We have scrutinized every conceivable way to cut costs on the bridge and will continue to do so during the final design phase. We cannot justify the expenditure of public funds on a venture that appears to have many obstacles to success.

Sincerely,



Craig Falkum
District Structures Engineer

cc: Michael Hoelker, Wis/DOT; Mn/DOT - Liz Walton, Kevin Western, Manjula Louis,
Dan Prather, Nelrae Succio, Greg Paulson, Jai Kalsy, Jean Meyer, File

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La Crosse Area Planning Committee

Metropolitan Planning Organization
Serving the La Crosse/La Crescent Urbanized Area

Tom Faella, Director Jackie Eastwood, Transportation Planner
La Crosse County Administrative Center
400 4th Street North ☐ Room 3050 ☐ La Crosse, WI 54601-3200
PH: 608.785.5977 or 608.785.6141 FAX: 608.793.6525

March 24, 2008

Craig Falkum, P.E.
District Structures Engineer, Mn/DOT
2900 48th Street NW
Rochester, MN 55901-5848

Dear Mr. Falkum:

I am writing in response to discussion that occurred at the March 5, 2008 meeting of the Dresbach Bridge Rehabilitation Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) regarding bicycle accommodations within the project area.

As reflected in the meeting minutes:

"Wisconsin did not seem to have an interest in building a bike path on the river bridge. The general feeling was that the connection along TH 61 to La Crescent was the desirable way to go. FHWA strongly noted that if there is no plan for a trail then there is no funding available for a trail on the bridge. General consensus of the TAC was to provide a bike trail through the interchange area to the south side and future efforts would be needed to extend it south to La Crescent."

The La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) strongly supports using available funds to implement recommendations in current plans before committing to a new bikeway on the I-90 Dresbach Bridge.

In response to the comment made by the FHWA representative, there are no local plans to construct a bikeway on the bridge.

The January, 2004 *La Crescent Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan* recommends the "Tourist Trail" from Winona through La Crescent as a future link of the Mississippi River Trail, and preferred connection from La Crescent to the trail systems in surrounding Minnesota and Wisconsin. The plan recognizes that the proposed section "from E. Main St. north to I-90 represents a very difficult and expensive trail to complete" and that "bridges in the I-90 / TH 61 interchange that intersect with the proposed trail will need to be checked for compatibility with the trail regarding lateral and vertical clearances."

The plan further recommends the bicycle and pedestrian connection along USH 14/61 and the "Wagon Wheel Trail" between La Crescent and La Crosse, Wisconsin. The Wagon Wheel Trail has been recognized by Mn/DOT with a \$480,000 Enhancement grant and will be started in 2010. Mn/DOT is also planning additional bicycle accommodations along TH 26 south of La Crescent.

The 2005 LAPC long-range transportation plan further recommends to "construct bicycle and pedestrian facilities as recommended in the *La Crescent Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*."

Two local groups, the Houston County Trails Group and the LAPC Bicycle / Pedestrian Advisory Committee, agreed at March meetings that accommodations through the I-90 / TH 61 intersection to the Root River Trail in Houston County, and to La Crosse in Wisconsin are more important than a bikeway on I-90 and are "the desirable way to go."

The March 5 TAC meeting minutes further report that "Wisconsin did not seem to have an interest in building a bike path on the river bridge." In my correspondence with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Southwest Region, the department has identified a number of concerns:

- There is an extensive length of I-90 roadway and structures on the Wisconsin side (from the Dresbach Bridge to French Island) that would be WisDOT fiscal responsibility to upgrade with bike accommodations at some time. The WisDOT I-90 roadway is not scheduled for any improvements at this time.
- Traditionally, WisDOT has avoided adding bike accommodations to interstate facilities.
- WisDOT focuses on adding bike accommodations to routes that enhance multimodal choices for commuters. This I-90 corridor does not show the potential for commuters from Minnesota to Wisconsin.
- There would be significant environmental issues (wetlands) encountered on the WisDOT side for adding a bike facility to the French Island area.

Noting the recommendations in current plans, the agreement of local advocacy groups, and the concerns of WisDOT, the LAPC Policy Board voted, on March 19, 2008, to support the recommendation that Mn/DOT concentrate on safe bicycle and pedestrian accommodations through the I-90 / TH 61 intersection to La Crescent before considering a bikeway on the Dresbach Bridge.

Please contact me if you have further questions on this recommendation.

Thank you,



Tom Faella, Executive Director

Cc: Michael Hoelker, Wisconsin DOT
John Chapman, LAPC

Stipulations

1. That the requested right-of-way be located as stated in the legal description (revised January 9, 1963) and as shown on the plat accompanying the application designated Project I 90-1(2)0 and dated January 10, 1963, excepting lots 3 and 4 sec. 14, T. 16 N., R. 8 W., fourth principal meridian, which are not under administration by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.
2. That the applicant shall not disturb, obliterate or destroy any land boundary or survey monument unless the applicant has requested and received from the Regional Director, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, approval of measures taken to perpetuate the location of aforesaid monuments.
3. Notwithstanding the provisions of 43 CFR 244.55(d), the applicant agrees that the right-of-way shall be used for the construction, maintenance and development of a highway only and that no other facilities of any nature whatsoever shall be placed or permitted to be placed within such right-of-way, except under such terms and conditions as may be prescribed by the Director of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.
4. The State Highway Commission of Wisconsin agrees to comply with all regulations including the terms and conditions of Section 244.9 of the Bureau of Land Management Regulations approved June 24, 1952, as amended, except (e) thereof which is deleted in its entirety; (1) thereof which is amended to read: "That the allowance of the right-of-way shall be subject to the express condition that the exercise thereof will not unduly interfere with the management, administration or disposal by the United States of the lands affected thereby . . ." and (m) deleted in its entirety and in lieu thereof the following stipulation added:

That the right-of-way shall be subject to the express condition that it may be terminated at the option of the Secretary of the Interior in the event of a breach of terms or conditions under which the right-of-way is granted.
5. All valid rights existing on the date of grant.
6. All regulations in the circulars listed above.
7. Filing of proof of construction within 7 years from the date of grant.

JUL 15 1964	
D.E.	✓
P&D	
R/W	
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Mn.	
F&O	

STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN

January 22, 1964
(Date)

(Signature) Secretary

I 90-1(2)

Par. 1